

**In the claims:**

1. (cancel)
2. (cancel)
3. (currently amended) A tile sponge washing and conditioning apparatus as set forth in claim 1 6 wherein

said first wall is of planar configuration said first wall having a first and a second edge, a top and a bottom edge and an inner and an outer surface;

said second wall is of planar configuration said second wall having a first and a second side, a top and a bottom end and an inner and an outer face, said second wall being disposed parallel relative to said first wall.

4. (cancel)
5. (cancel)
6. (currently amended) A tile sponge washing and conditioning apparatus for washing in water a sponge used during a ceramic tile laying operation, said apparatus comprising:  
a frame for disposition thereof within the water, said frame including:

a first wall;

a second wall disposed spaced from said first wall;

a first roller having an axis of rotation which extends through said walls;

a second roller having a rotational axis which extends through said walls;

said rollers cooperating with each other to define therebetween a pathway for the passage therethrough of the sponge to be washed and conditioned such that when said rollers are counter rotated relative to each other, the sponge is squeezed and driven through said passageway so that the sponge is washed and conditioned by the water during passage of the sponge through said passageway;

said frame being fabricated from stainless steel;

said first wall including:

a first ear which extends from said first edge;

a second ear which extends from said second edge;

said second wall includes:

a first extension which extends from said first side;

a second extension which extends from said second side;

a container for containing the water, said container defining a rim for supporting said ears and said extensions such that when said ears and extensions are being supported by said rim, said rollers are disposed within the water contained within said container;

~~6. — A tile sponge washing and conditioning apparatus as set forth in claim 5 wherein~~

said frame ~~includes~~ including:

a first reinforcing member which extends between said first ear and said first extension; and

a second reinforcing member which extends between said second ear and said second extension such that said reinforcing members maintain said first and second walls in a spaced parallel disposition relative to each other.

7. (currently amended) A tile sponge washing and conditioning apparatus for washing in

water a sponge used during a ceramic tile laying operation, said apparatus comprising:

a frame for disposition thereof within the water, said frame including:

a first wall;

a second wall disposed spaced from said first wall;

a first roller having an axis of rotation which extends through said walls;

a second roller having a rotational axis which extends through said walls;

said rollers cooperating with each other to define therebetween a pathway for the passage therethrough of the sponge to be washed and conditioned such that when said rollers are counter rotated relative to each other, the sponge is squeezed and driven through said passageway so that the sponge is washed and conditioned by the water during passage of the sponge through said passageway;

~~A tile sponge washing and conditioning apparatus as set forth in claim 1 wherein~~

said first roller ~~includes~~ including:

a hub disposed coaxially relative to said axis of rotation, said hub extending through said walls such that said walls bearingly support said hub for rotation of said hub relative to said walls, said hub having a first and a second end;

a first collar defining a peripheral edge, said first collar being secured to said first end of said hub for rotation with said hub;

a second collar defining a further peripheral edge, said second collar being secured to said second end of said hub for rotation with said hub, said collars being disposed between said walls;

a plurality of sponge engaging members extending between said collars, said sponge engaging members being spaced relative to each other along and adjacent to said peripheral edges of said collars such that when said first roller rotates, said sponge engaging members squeeze and condition the sponge;

said second roller includes:

an axle disposed coaxially relative to said rotational axis, said axle extending through said walls such that said walls bearingly support said axle for rotation of said axle relative to said walls, said axle having a first and a second extremity;

a first flange defining a periphery, said first flange being secured to said first extremity of said axle for rotation with said axle;

a second flange defining a further periphery, said second flange being secured to said second extremity of said axle for rotation with said axle, said flanges being disposed between said walls;

a plurality of sponge squeezing members extending between said flanges, said sponge squeezing members being spaced relative to each other along and adjacent to said peripheries of said flanges such that when said second roller rotates, said sponge squeezing members squeeze and condition the sponge; and

said sponge engaging members and said sponge squeezing members cooperating together to drive the sponge through said passageway while alternately compressing and releasing the sponge for condition the sponge.

8. (currently amended) A tile sponge washing and conditioning apparatus as set forth in claim 4 6 further including:

a plurality of pairs of counter rotating rollers rotatably supported between said walls for further defining said passageway so that as the sponge progressively is driven from a pair of said rollers to an adjacent pair of rollers, the sponge is progressively washed and conditioned.

9. (currently amended) A tile sponge washing and conditioning apparatus as set forth in claim 4 6 further including:

a gear wheel secured to said first roller;

a further gear wheel secured to said second roller;

a drive connected to said gear wheels for driving said gear wheels in opposite rotational directions

relative to each other so that the sponge is driven through said passageway.

10. (currently amended) A tile sponge washing and conditioning apparatus as set forth in claim 1 ~~4~~ 6 further including:

a plurality of pairs of counter rotating rollers rotatably supported between said walls for further defining said passageway so that as the sponge progressively is driven from a pair of said rollers to an adjacent pair of rollers, the sponge is progressively washed and conditioned;

a gear wheel secured to said first roller;

a further gear wheel secured to said second roller;

a drive connected to said gear wheels for driving said gear wheels in opposite rotational directions relative to each other so that the sponge is driven through said passageway;

a geared wheel secured to each roller respectively of said pairs of rollers so that each of said geared wheels is connected to said drive such that said rollers of each pair are counter rotated relative to each other so that said rollers progressively drive the sponge through said passageway for washing and conditioning the sponge in the water.

11. (original) A tile sponge washing and conditioning apparatus as set forth in claim 9

wherein

said drive includes:

a manual crank for rotating said first and second rollers.

12. (original) A tile sponge washing and conditioning apparatus as set forth in claim 10

wherein

said drive includes:

a manual crank for rotating said first and second rollers and said pairs of rollers.

13. (original) A tile sponge washing and conditioning apparatus as set forth in claim 9

wherein

said drive includes:

a motor for rotating said first and second rollers.

14. (original) A tile sponge washing and conditioning apparatus as set forth in claim 10

wherein

said drive includes:

a motor for rotating said first and second rollers and said pairs of rollers.

15. (original) A tile sponge washing and conditioning apparatus as set forth in claim 10 wherein

each of said gear wheels and each of said geared wheels is intermeshed with an adjacent wheel.

16. (currently amended) A tile sponge washing and conditioning apparatus as set forth in claim 1 6 wherein

said passageway has a first and a second end, the sponge being placed adjacent to said first end of said passageway and the cleaned and conditioned sponge exiting from said apparatus adjacent said second end of said passageway.

17. (cancel)

18. (original) A tile sponge washing and conditioning apparatus for washing in water a sponge used during a ceramic tile laying operation, said apparatus comprising:

a frame for disposition thereof within the water, said frame including:

a first wall;

a second wall disposed spaced from said first wall;

a first roller having an axis of rotation which extends through said walls;

a second roller having a rotational axis which extends through said walls;

said rollers cooperating with each other to define therebetween a pathway for the passage therethrough of the sponge to be washed and conditioned such that when said rollers are counter rotated relative to each other, the sponge is squeezed and driven through said passageway so that the sponge is washed and conditioned by the water during passage of the sponge through said passageway;

said frame is fabricated from stainless steel;

said first wall is of planar configuration said first wall having a first and a second edge, a top and a bottom edge and an inner and an outer surface;

said second wall is of planar configuration said second wall having a first and a second side, a top and a bottom end and an inner and an outer face, said second wall being disposed parallel relative to said first wall;



said first wall including:

a first ear which extends from said first edge;

a second ear which extends from said second edge;

said second wall includes:

a first extension which extends from said first side;

a second extension which extends from said second side;

a container for containing the water, said container defining a rim for supporting said ears and said extensions such that when said ears and extensions are being supported by said rim, said rollers are disposed within the water contained within said container;

said frame including:

a first reinforcing member which extends between said first ear and said first extension;

a second reinforcing member which extends between said second ear and said second extension

such that said reinforcing members maintain said first and second walls in a spaced parallel disposition relative to each other;

said first roller including:

a hub disposed coaxially relative to said axis of rotation, said hub extending through said walls such that said walls bearingly support said hub for rotation of said hub relative to said walls, said hub having a first and a second end;

a first collar defining a peripheral edge, said first collar being secured to said first end of said hub for rotation with said hub;

a second collar defining a further peripheral edge, said second collar being secured to said second end of said hub for rotation with said hub, said collars being disposed between said walls;

a plurality of sponge engaging members extending between said collars, said sponge engaging members being spaced relative to each other along and adjacent to said peripheral edges of said collars such that when said first roller rotates, said sponge engaging members squeeze and condition the sponge;

said second roller including:

an axle disposed coaxially relative to said rotational axis, said axle extending through said walls such that said walls bearingly support said axle for rotation of said axle relative to said walls, said axle having a first and a second extremity;

a first flange defining a periphery, said first flange being secured to said first extremity of said axle for rotation with said axle;

a second flange defining a further periphery, said second flange being secured to said second extremity of said axle for rotation with said axle, said flanges being disposed between said walls;

a plurality of sponge squeezing members extending between said flanges, said sponge squeezing members being spaced relative to each other along and adjacent to said peripheries of said flanges such that when said second roller rotates, said sponge squeezing members squeeze and condition the sponge;

said sponge engaging members and said sponge squeezing members cooperating together to drive the sponge through said passageway while alternately compressing and releasing the sponge for condition the sponge;

a plurality of pairs of counter rotating rollers rotatably supported between said walls for further defining said passageway so that as the sponge progressively is driven from a pair of said rollers to an adjacent pair of rollers, the sponge is progressively washed and conditioned;

a gear wheel secured to said first roller;

a further gear wheel secured to said second roller;

drive connected to said gear wheels for driving said gear wheels in opposite rotational directions relative to each other so that the sponge is driven through said passageway;

a plurality of pairs of counter rotating rollers rotatably supported between said walls for further defining said passageway so that as the sponge progressively is driven from a pair of said rollers to an adjacent pair of rollers, the sponge is progressively washed and conditioned;

a gear wheel secured to said first roller;

a further gear wheel secured to said second roller;

a drive connected to said gear wheels for driving said gear wheels in opposite rotational directions relative to each other so that the sponge is driven through said passageway;

a geared wheel secured to each roller respectively of said pairs of rollers so that each of said geared wheels are connected to said drive such that said rollers of each pair are counter rotated relative to each other so that said rollers progressively drive the sponge through said passageway for washing

and conditioning the sponge in the water;

said drive including:

a motor for rotating said first and second rollers and said pairs of rollers;

each of said gear wheels and each of said geared wheels being intermeshed with an adjacent wheel; and

said passageway having a first and a second end, the sponge being placed adjacent to said first end of said passageway and the cleaned and conditioned sponge exiting from said apparatus adjacent said second end of said passageway.